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TERROR AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

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A supersecret anti-terrorist plan

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WASHINGTON Shortly after members of the Italian Red Brigade abducted U.S. Gen. James Dozier last December, the Department of Defense sent a team of six anti-terrorist experts to Italy to help in the hunt for the general and his captors.

At the time, the Pentagon said little about the team. Then, and now, Pentagon spokesmen refuse to name the U.S. personnel, the unit on which they serve and even the location of their base.

The government's silence on its response to the terrorist incident underscores the policy that officials of the departments of defense and state readily admit they follow: that they are far more willing to talk about the threat of terrorism than the contingency plans the United States has to deal with it.

"There are very, very few things that are dealt with around here that are more sensitive than that," said Lt. Col. Jerry Grohowski, a defense public affairs spokesman who handles terrorism questions.

"You can usually find somebody to say something about something," he added. "But I've never heard anybody talk about how we deal with terrorists."

From the outset of his administration President Reagan has vowed to deal forcefully with terrorism, although most experts say his options lay more in response than prevention. Besides continuing a Carter administration initiative to increase security at U.S. embassies, the president has urged other nations to support international antiterrorist agreements.

In the wake of the aborted 1980 rescue mission in Iran, President Carter upgraded the U.S. military response to terrorism by establishing a unit designed solely to respond to terrorist activity. The supersecret force,

drawn from all services, reports directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its members — and officials won't say how many there are — are not known to have performed in any combat function since the unit was established in August 1980.

The U.S. military has at least seven other forces with counter-terrorist capabilities. They are the U.S. Army Ranger Battalions at Fort Lewis, Wash.; Marine Landing Team at Camp Lejeune, N.C.; the Marine Amphibious Unit, afloat in the Mediterranean; Army Special Forces at

four different locations; Marine Reconnaissance Co. at Camp Lejeune; Navy Sea, Air, Land Platoons based at three sites; and Air Force support teams, also at three sites.

When an incident such as the Dozier abduction occurs abroad, various government agencies mobilize to form a working group. The team that monitored developments during Dozier's 42 days of captivity in Italy was a small unit that included representatives from State, CIA, Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the FBI.

"That was the most serious incident we've handled during this administration," said Richard Higgins of the State Department's Office for Combatting Terrorism. "That working group functioned throughout the 42 days the general was held. We met as things developed."

Asked to what extent the U.S. antiterrorism team was involved in staging Dozier's release, Higgins replied: "It was an Italian show."

"They deserve all the credit for this," Higgins said. "They had 5,000 to 6,000 persons working on it." He added that the U.S. provided assistance when called upon but would not go into details.

THE STATE Department's Office for Combatting Terrorism defines that term as

"the threat or use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority when such actions are intended to shock or intimidate a target group wider than the immediate victims."

International terrorism occurs when the actions are conducted with the support of a foreign government or directed against foreign nationals or governments, states the department's latest terrorism report dated December 1981.

The study, reviewing a 14-year period from 1968 through mid-1981, indicates that terrorist attacks against diplomats and diplomatic facilities have increased dramatically in the last three years. For the first six months of 1981 alone, there were 409 attacks against diplomats from 60 countries, compared with 281 attacks for all of 1978.

In 1975, 30 percent of all terrorist attacks were directed against diplomats. Five years later, that percentage had soared to 54 percent.

The takeover of the U.S. embassy in Iran and the sacking of one in Pakistan, coupled with the alarming rise of attacks against diplomats worldwide, has triggered an emergency program to increase security at diplomatic outposts. Walter Stoessel, now the no. 2 man at the State Department, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee last year that the government is "urgently upgrading security at 24 high-threat posts" overseas at a cost of \$41.9 million.

"We are constructing safehavens in our embassies and consulates, improving building-access controls, installing non-lethal denial systems, and concentrating on other life-safety measures," Richard Kennedy, Undersecretary of State for Management, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last summer. "However, even with the most appropriate security measures, we will not be able to prevent every act of terrorism directed against us."

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